



SENTENCING IN WISCONSIN

Snapshots of Information on Wisconsin Sentencing

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Sentencing and Costs in Wisconsin: An Initial Report

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Sections 973.30(1)(d) and 973.30(1)(h) of the Wisconsin statutes charge the Wisconsin Sentencing Commission to “[p]rovide information to the legislature, state agencies, and the public regarding the costs to and other needs of the department that result from sentencing practices” and “[a]ssist the legislature in assessing the cost of enacting new or revising existing statutes affecting criminal sentencing.” Similarly, in his charge to the Commission, Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle urged the Commission to “take into account the overall costs and effectiveness of sentencing practices.” By using data collection and analysis, Governor Doyle asked the Commission to suggest ways to simultaneously protect public safety and reduce public expenditures.

The Commission has posted on its website (<http://wsc.wi.gov>) an initial report compiling and summarizing the current national research and evaluation literature on costs and effectiveness of sentencing—“Cost-Effective Criminal Justice: A Survey of National Issues and Trends.” The study examines the following topics:

- *The Cost of Crime*
- *The Cost of Sentencing and Corrections*

- *Current State Expenditures*
- *Rising Healthcare Expenditures*
- *Contagious Diseases*
- *Aging Inmates*
- *Current Policy Responses to Rising Correctional Costs*
- *Effective Criminal Justice Interventions*
- *What Works?*
- *Community Corrections*
- *Probation and Parole*
- *Drug Abuse Treatment and Drug Courts*
- *Criminal Risk Assessment*
- *Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission’s Risk Assessment Tool*
- *Washington State Offender Accountability Act*

Under “effective criminal justice interventions,” for example, the report discusses research from the University of Maryland analyzing the outcomes of sentencing options commonly available to judges. The table below summarizes the findings of those analyses:

Table 1: The Effectiveness of Various Criminal Justice Interventions

What Works?	What Doesn't Work?	What's Promising?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incarceration of offenders who will continue to commit crimes • Rehabilitation programs for adult and juvenile offenders that tailor treatment to individual risk factors • Drug treatment in prison-based therapeutic communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctional boot camps that use militaristic basic training model • "Scared Straight" programs that show juvenile offenders conditions inside maximum security prisons • Shock probation, shock parole, and split sentence • Home detention with electronic monitoring • Intensive supervision on parole or probation (ISP) • Rehabilitation programs using counseling that is not tailored to each offender's risk factors • Residential programs for juvenile offenders in rural or wilderness settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug courts that mandate and monitor both rehabilitation and drug treatment • Drug treatment in jails followed by urinalysis in the community • Intensive supervision and after-care of juvenile status offenders • Intensive supervision and after-care of serious juvenile offenders • Combining fines for criminal acts with other penalties

Developing criminal justice policies that achieve justice for victims and the public while not wasting taxpayer dollars on inefficient, ineffective activities that also divert funds from better programs requires on-going, in-depth analysis for any state. Furthermore, getting judges good information and data on effective sentencing options is a common priority among all state courts. The legislature and the governor in Wisconsin have requested that the Commission consistently provide the most recent and reliable evaluations and data available to aid policymakers and judges. This report is a first step in meeting those expectations. Future reports will be tailored more specifically to Wisconsin and its current practices.

The Wisconsin Sentencing Commission periodically publishes "Sentencing in Wisconsin" to provide the public, state courts, and policymakers data on state sentencing practices. For other publications, or more information about the Commission, see its website, <http://wsc.wi.gov>